

Archaeological Backgrounds of the Exilic and Postexilic Era Part 4: The Archaeological Background of Nehemiah

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Artaxerxes the King

Artaxerxes I

It is certain that Nehemiah served as the cupbearer of Artaxerxes I (Neh 1:1; 2:1), the Achaemenid king who ruled from 464 to 424 B.C. An Elephantine papyrus, dated to 407, mentions the sons of Sanballat, the governor of Samaria and adversary of Nehemiah.¹

Artaxerxes² was nicknamed by the Greeks *Longimanus*. According to Plutarch, "The first Artaxerxes, among all the kings of Persia the most remarkable for a gentle and noble spirit, was surnamed the Long-handed, his right hand being longer than his left, and was the son of Xerxes."³

Longimanus was the third son of Xerxes and Amestris. His older brothers were named Darius and Hystaspes. Their father was assassinated in his bedchamber between August and December, 465 B.C., by Artabanus, a powerful courtier. In the ensuing months, Artaxerxes, who was but eighteen years old, managed to kill Artabanus and his brother Darius. He then defeated his brother Hystaspes in Bactria. His first regnal year is reckoned from April 13, 464.⁴

In 461 B.C. Artaxerxes took up residence at Susa.⁵ He used the palace of Darius I until it burned down near the end of his reign. He then moved to Persepolis, where he lived in the former palace of Darius I. He completed the great Throne Hall begun by Xerxes, as indicated by a text in Old Persian and Akkadian.⁶ The only other

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extant Old Persian inscription of this king is an identical one-line text found on four silver dishes.

When Artaxerxes I came to the throne, he was faced with a major revolt in Egypt which was to last a decade. The rebellion was led by Inarus, a Libyan, and by Amyrtaeus of Sais. They defeated the Persian satrap Achaemenes, the brother of Xerxes, and gained control of much of the Delta region by 462.

The Athenians, who had been at war with the Persians since the latter had invaded Greece in 490 B.C., sent two hundred ships to aid the rebels.⁷ In 459 they helped capture Memphis, the capital of Lower Egypt. It was against this background that the Persians may have found it expedient to support Ezra's return in 458 to secure a loyal buffer state in Palestine.

In 456 Megabyzus, the satrap of Syria, advanced against Egypt with a huge fleet and army.⁸ In the course of eighteen months he was able to suppress the revolt, capturing Inarus in the same year. A fleet of forty Athenian ships with six thousand men sailed into a Persian trap.

In spite of promises made by Megabyzus, Inarus was impaled in 454 at the instigation of Amestris, the mother of Artaxerxes I, who may possibly be the Vashti of the Esther story.⁹ Angered at this betrayal, Megabyzus revolted against the king from 449 to 446. If the events of Ezra 4:7–23 took place in this period, Artaxerxes I would have been suspicious of the building activities in Jerusalem. How then could the same king have commissioned Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of the city in 445? By then both the Egyptian revolt and the rebellion of Megabyzus had been resolved.

Artaxerxes I's long forty-year reign ended when he died from natural causes in the winter of 424—a rarity in view of the frequent assassinations of Persian kings. He was buried in one of the four tombs, probably the second from the left, at Naqsh-e Rostam, north of Persepolis.

His sole legitimate heir, Xerxes II, reigned for only forty-five days before he was murdered by his half-brother, Sogdianus, the son of a Babylonian concubine. After about seven months the latter was thrown into a furnace (cf. Dan 3) by Ochus, the son of another Babylonian concubine. Ochus then adopted the throne name of Darius II and reigned from 423 to 404.¹⁰

The Order of Ezra and Nehemiah

The nontraditional view. The most important controversy which has arisen in regard to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah

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is the question of the chronological relationship between these two men. According to the traditional view, Ezra arrived in the seventh year of Artaxerxes I (Ezra 7:7) in 458 B.C., and Nehemiah arrived in the same king's twentieth year (Neh 2:1) in 445, some thirteen years later.

Many scholars have adopted a reverse order in which Nehemiah arrived in 445 and Ezra arrived later in the seventh year of Artaxerxes II in 398. Other scholars have favored an intermediate position which maintains the contemporaneity of the men but places Ezra later than the traditional view in the twenty-seventh or the thirty-seventh year of Artaxerxes I, that is, in 438 or 428.

About a dozen lines of arguments have been adduced in favor of the reverse order. Three of these arguments can be considered here.

1. The contemporaneity of Ezra and Nehemiah. As the text stands, Ezra and Nehemiah are noted together in Nehemiah 8:9 at the reading of the Law and in Nehemiah 12:26, 36 at the dedication of the wall. As the name Nehemiah is lacking in 1 Esdras 9:49, which is parallel to Nehemiah 8:9, it has been argued that Nehemiah's name has been inserted in the latter passage as a gloss. It has also been argued that Nehemiah 12:26, 36 were also added to the original text. Emerton has asserted, "No meeting between them is recorded and they never both play active parts in the same action, one is active, and at most, the other's name is mentioned in passing."¹¹

But it is not the case that one can delete either Ezra or Nehemiah from Nehemiah 12:26 without any consequences, for to do so would leave one of the processions without a leader.

The fact that the references to the contemporaneity of Ezra and Nehemiah are few is readily explicable, as Bright points out. "The Chronicler's interests were predominantly ecclesiastical, and to these Nehemiah was peripheral. Nehemiah, on the other hand, intended his memoirs as a personal *apologia*, not as a history of the contemporary Jewish community; he was concerned exclusively with what he himself had done."¹² Other examples of contemporary Old Testament figures who do not refer to each other include Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and Haggai and Zechariah.¹³

2. The date of the composition of Ezra-Nehemiah. Inasmuch as the text as it now stands presents Ezra's priority over Nehemiah, if Ezra came later the confusion must have arisen at a

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later date removed from the events. Some hold that this occurred in the third century B.C. Ackroyd writes, "But if, as seems more probable, the Chronicler was active in about the middle of the fourth century, not more than a generation after this late dating for Ezra (in 398), then the disorder would be very difficult to explain."¹⁴

Other scholars are convinced that the evidence points to an even earlier date for the work of the Chronicler. Cross concludes, "The fact that all genealogies in Chr₃ end shortly before 400 B.C. virtually eliminates the popular view that Ezra followed Nehemiah in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes II, 398 B.C."¹⁵

3. The political situation. Since the early years of Artaxerxes I were troubled by a major revolt in Egypt, some have questioned whether Ezra would have been sent on an unprotected journey in 458. In the year 459/458 the king sent an army of 300,000 men against Egypt. The roads would have been so filled with troop caravans, it has been argued, that there would have been no room for Ezra's caravan.¹⁶

On the other hand, it could be argued that the presence of such troops would have made the caravan safe from robbers. Indeed, the precarious situation in Egypt probably made it desirable for the Persians to have a friendly agent in Palestine. Heichelheim, noting that Dor on the Palestinian coast is found on the Athenian tribute list for 454, concluded: "If we are right the new strength which Ezra was authorized to give...was urgently needed from the point of view of the Persian government to make defections in Palestine to the Athenians less dangerous..."¹⁷ Another classical scholar, Myres, concurs. "In particular, the very wide authority given to Ezra in 458 reflects the general uneasiness and the anxieties of the Persian government, during the revolt of Inarus in the Delta."¹⁸

One must also remember that the political situation in Palestine in 398 would have made Ezra's mission at that time most unlikely. When Johanan, the high priest, killed his brother,¹⁹ the Persian governor Bagoas imposed a penalty on Jerusalem for seven years. According to Reicke, "This Temple crisis under Bagoas can simply not be squared with Ezra's mission to restore the Temple, supported juridically and monetarily by the Persian throne (Ezra 7:6, 11-28)."²⁰

The traditional view. The traditional order has never lacked defenders. In 1948 Rowley wrote, "Despite this impressive support [for the reverse order], this view has never been unchallenged,

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and there have always been scholars of eminence—even more numerous than its supporters—who have refused to adopt it, but have adhered to the traditional view."²¹ In 1965 Rowley listed twenty-six scholars who supported the traditional order.²² In 1968 Kellermann defended the traditional position by seeking to refute point by point the arguments that have been advanced for the reverse order.²³

On the other hand, up to the 1960s there had been a growing consensus among critical scholars in favor of the reverse order. In 1970 Stinespring went so far as to affirm the following.

Indeed, the placing of Ezra after Nehemiah may now be spoken of as part of "critical orthodoxy," having been incorporated into such works as *The International Critical Commentary*, *The Interpreter's Bible*, *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, *The Oxford Annotated Bible*, and into much of the church-school literature of the leading Protestant churches in North America.²⁴

Within the decade of the 1970s, however, growing support for the traditional position has arrived once more. Many important scholars have voiced their dissatisfaction with the arguments for the reverse order. Smith, for example, comments, "The minor reasons commonly given for dating Ezra after Nehemiah are all of them trivial and have been disposed of by Kellermann."²⁵ Cross also writes, "Of the many arguments brought forward to support the position that Ezra followed Nehemiah to Jerusalem, most are without weight."²⁶ Talmon suggests, "Such tenuous argumentation does not warrant a reordering of the biblical presentation.... Today a more optimistic appreciation of the biblical

presentation seems to be gaining ground.”²⁷ And Tadmor notes, “Actually, more methodological problems are posed by assuming that Ezra came after Nehemiah than by accepting the view that he preceded Nehemiah.”²⁸

In summary, though the reverse order of Nehemiah before Ezra still has many eminent supporters, there has been within the last decade a remarkable development of support among equally distinguished scholars for the traditional order of Ezra before Nehemiah.

Nehemiah

Nehemiah the Cupbearer

The name Nehemiah means “Yahweh has comforted.” It contains the same verbal root which is found in the names Nahum

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and Menahem. The name appears as Nehemyahu on an ostracon from Arad dated to the seventh century B.C.²⁹ The name also appears as the name of a slave on a fourth-century B.C. Aramaic papyrus.³⁰

Nehemiah was the cupbearer of Artaxerxes I (Neh 1:11). The Hebrew word *הַקָּשׁוּ* translated “cupbearer,” is a hiphil participle of the verb *הָקַשׁ* and literally means “one who gives (someone) something to drink.” It occurs twelve times in the Old Testament in the sense of “cupbearer.” For example, in 1 Kings 10:5 and 2 Chronicles 9:4 it is used of Solomon’s attendants. In the Joseph story it occurs nine times (Gen 40:1, 2, 5, 9, 13, 20, 21, 23; 41:9), but its significance is obscured by the Authorized Version and the Revised Standard Version which translate the word “butler.” The English word “butler” comes from the Middle English “boteler,” that is, “one who attends to bottles.”

Classical sources give detailed descriptions of cupbearers at the Persian court. Xenophon describes one of the main duties as follows: “Now, it is a well known fact that the cupbearers, when they proffer the cup, draw off some of it with the ladle, pour it into their left hand, and swallow it down—so that, if they should put poison in, they may not profit by it.”³¹ That the cupbearer could have other responsibilities as well is indicated by Tobit 1:22. “Now Ahikar was cupbearer, keeper of the signet, and in charge of administration of the accounts, for Esarhaddon had appointed him second to himself.”

From varied sources it may be assumed that Nehemiah as a royal cupbearer would probably have had the following traits:

1. He would have been well trained in court etiquette (cf. Dan 1:4–5).³²
2. He was probably a handsome individual (cf. Dan 1:4, 13, 15).³³
3. He would certainly know how to select the wines to set before the king. A proverb in the Babylonian Talmud (Baba Qamma 92b) states, “The wine belongs to the master but credit for it is due to his cupbearer.”
4. He would have to be a convivial companion to the king with a willingness to lend an ear at all times. North is reminded of Saki, the companion of Omar Khayyam, who served wine to him and listened to his discourses.³⁴
5. He would be a man of great influence as one with the closest access to the king, and one who could well determine who could see the king.³⁵

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6. Above all, Nehemiah had to be an individual who enjoyed the unreserved confidence of the king. The great need for trustworthy attendants is underscored by the intrigues which were endemic to the Achaemenid court.³⁶

Was Nehemiah a Eunuch?

Many scholars have assumed as certain or as probable the thesis that Nehemiah was also a eunuch.³⁷ Those who have maintained this position include such influential and diverse scholars as Batten, Olmstead, Albright, Bright, Schultz, Kelly, and Myers. The following arguments speak against viewing Nehemiah as a eunuch.

1. It should be noted that the Hebrew text does not call Nehemiah a eunuch. The Hebrew word for eunuch is *סִרְטָ*, which is a loanword from the Akkadian phrase *ša rêš šarri* (or simply *ša rêši*), which literally means “one who (stands) at the head of the king.” By the late second millennium B.C. the Akkadian phrase had come to have the connotation of “eunuch.”³⁸ The word occurs twelve times in Esther and seven times in Daniel.
2. In place of the *οι νοχοός* (“cupbearer”) of the Codex Alexandrinus, both the Codex Vaticanus and the Codex Sinaiticus have *ευ του χος* (“eunuch”). But this is simply an error for the former word.
3. Eduard Meyer explained the Hebrew word *תִּרְשָׁתָּהּ*, (which the Authorized Version merely transliterates as “Tirshatha”) as a word designating a palace eunuch, from the New Persian word *tārash* “to cut.”³⁹

But the word which is used in the Old Testament only five times seems to be a title of honor for the governor of the province (Ezra 2:63; Neh 7:65, 70; 8:9; 10:1). The best explanation of the word still remains that advocated by Rudolph, who explained it as a term meaning “the one to be feared or respected,” i.e., “excellency,” from Old Persian *‘tarsa*.⁴⁰

4. Another argument which has been used to identify Nehemiah as a eunuch is the reference to the queen’s presence (Neh 2:6). But not every high official who stood in the presence of the queen was necessarily a eunuch. The Book of Esther nowhere indicates that Haman was a eunuch. On the contrary, the villain’s downfall came when the king suspected him of trying to seduce the queen in her own chamber (Esther 7:8).

One of the edicts on harem conduct published by Weidner reads, “A courtier or a eunuch when he would speak with a

woman of the palace should not approach closer than seven steps. He may not speak with her if she is insufficiently clothed, nor may he remain standing and listening when two palace women are gossiping.”⁴¹ The point is that courtiers, known in Akkadian as manzaz pâni or maziz pâni who served as pages and bodyguards, were permitted to enter the harem though they were not eunuchs.

5. Perhaps the strongest extra-biblical evidence for the thesis that Nehemiah may have been a eunuch cupbearer is the account of Ctesias that cupbearers were eunuchs in his day. Ctesias was a Greek physician at the court of Artaxerxes II (404-359 B.C.)

Unfortunately Ctesias is notorious as an unreliable historical source. In a key passage Ctesias describes Artembares, the chief cupbearer of Astyages, as a eunuch. But Herodotus indicates that Artembares was not a eunuch. In the same passage Ctesias has Cyrus succeeding Artembares as cupbearer, and Cyrus was certainly not a eunuch.⁴²

In conclusion, Nehemiah may have been a eunuch, but this remains only a possibility and not a probability, in this writer's opinion. Any dogmatic statement that he was a eunuch is based on a web of arguments which are in many cases untenable and in other cases less than convincing.

Nehemiah the Governor

Nehemiah was sent forth as the governor of Judah. In Nehemiah 5:15, Nehemiah referred to previous “governors” (plural of the Hebrew ⁴³גִּבּוֹרִים Galling believed that Judah did not have governors, and therefore he suggested that the reference here was to governors of Samaria. New archaeological evidence, however, confirms the accuracy of this reference to previous governors of Judah.

In 1974 a collection of about seventy bullae (clay seal impressions) and two seals from an unknown provenience were shown to Avigad. One of the seals is the first to bear the inscription YHD, which was the Persian designation of the province of Judah as already known from other seal impressions and coins. On the basis of paleography, Avigad dates the seals and bullae to the sixth and early fifth century B.C.

On the basis of this new evidence together with data from other sources, Avigad proposes the following list of the governors of Judah. ⁴⁴

<i>Name</i>	<i>Source</i>	<i>Date</i>
Sheshbazzar	Ezra 1:8; 5:14	538
Zerubbabel	Haggai 1:1, 14	515
Elnathan	Bulla and seal	late sixth century
Yeho'ezer	Jar impression	early fifth century
Ahzai	Jar impression	early fifth century
Nehemiah	Nehemiah 5:14; 12:26	445-432
Bagothi (Bagoas)	Elephantine papyrus	407
Yehezqiyah	Coins	330

Nehemiah's Opponents

The returning exiles had come back to a tiny enclave completely surrounded by hostile neighbors: the Samaritans to the north, the Ammonites to the east, the Arabs and the Edomites⁴⁵ to the south, and the Philistines and the Phoenicians to the West.⁴⁶

There had been opposition to the rebuilding of the Temple. There was even greater concern about the attempt to rebuild the walls as Judah's neighbors learned of Nehemiah's plans.

An interesting parallel to this comes from Greek history. After Athens' walls were destroyed by the Persians in 480 B.C., the Athenians wished to rebuild their wall. The Spartans tried to oppose this with the specious reason that if the Persians should come back again they would not have a walled city to hold. According to Thucydides, “The Lacedaemonians, perceiving what was in prospect, came on an embassy, partly because they themselves would have preferred to see neither the Athenians nor anyone else to have a wall....”⁴⁷

Sanballat the Samaritan

After the fall of Samaria in 722, the Assyrian kings kept importing inhabitants from Mesopotamia and Syria “who feared the Lord and served their own gods” (2 Kings 17:24–33).⁴⁸ The newcomers' influence would have served to dilute further the faith of the northerners who had already apostasized from the sole worship of Yahweh.

The opposition of the Samaritans was motivated not primarily by religious differences but by political considerations. The appearance of a

vigorous governor of Judah threatened the authority of the governor of Samaria. The satraps of neighboring provinces, especially in Anatolia, were constantly in opposition to each other.⁴⁹

The word translated by the New International Version “authority” of the governor in Nehemiah 3:7 is the Hebrew phrase *רִכְזָה*, literally “to the chair” or “to the throne.” From Samaria have recently come to light fragments of a lion’s paw and a bronze cylinder which belonged to the foot of a Persian throne similar to those depicted at Persepolis. Tadmor remarks, “A throne so similar to that of the Achaemenid kings might have belonged to their representative, the governor of Samaria.”⁵⁰

Nehemiah’s chief opponent was Sanballat, the Horonite, the governor of Samaria (Neh 2:10, 19; 4:1, 7; 6:1–2, 5, 12, 14; 13:28). His name is derived from Akkadian *Sin-uballit*, which means “Sin [the moon god] has given life.” His epithet the “Horonite” identifies him as coming from one of three possible areas: (a) Hauran east of the Sea of Galilee, (b) Horonaim in Moab (Jer 48:34), or (c) most probably upper or lower Beth-Horon, two key cities located twelve miles northwest of Jerusalem (Josh 10:10; 16:3, 5).

Though Sanballat is not called governor in the Book of Nehemiah, an important Elephantine papyrus makes his position explicit. A letter to Bagoas, the governor of Judah, refers to “Delaiah and Shelemiah, the sons of Sanballat the governor (*peḥâ*) of Samaria.”⁵¹ The letter is dated to 407 B.C. It is interesting that Sanballat’s sons both bear Yahwistic names. This does not mean, however, that the Samaritans were Yahwists but is simply an indication of the syncretistic character of the Samaritan religion.⁵²

In 1962 bedouins found a cave in Wadi ed-Daliyeh, northwest of Jericho, which contained fourth-century B.C. papyri. ⁵³ The papyri were found with the grim remains of about two hundred men, women, and children from Samaria who tried unsuccessfully to flee from the troops of Alexander the Great.

On the basis of papponymy (the recurrence of the same name in alternating generations) Cross has used the data from these Samaria papyri to reconstruct a list of governors over Samaria as follows:⁵⁴

<i>Name</i>	<i>Year of Birth</i>
Sanballat I	ca. 485
Delaiah	ca. 460
Sanballat II	ca. 435
Yesha'yahu	ca. 410
Hananiah	ca. 410, brother of former
Sanballat III	ca. 385.

Tobiah the Ammonite

The name Tobiah (Neh 1:10), which means “Yahweh is Good,” appears in the Murashu documents as *Tûbiâma*. He may have possibly been a Judaizing Ammonite, but was more probably a Yahwist Jew as indicated not only by his own name but also by that of his son, Jehohanan (Neh 6:18).

Some suggest that Tobiah was descended from an aristocratic family which owned estates in Gilead and was influential in Transjordan and in Jerusalem as early as the eighth century B.C.⁵⁵ Mazar has correlated varying lines of evidence to reconstruct a genealogical table of the Tobiad family.⁵⁶

<i>Generation Tobiad</i>		<i>Contemporary of</i>	<i>Flourished</i>
1	Tobiah, the king’s arm	Zedekiah	590
2	his son		
3	Tobiah, noble of Judah	Jeshua	520
4	his son		
5	Tobiah, Ammonite official	Nehemiah	440
6	Jehohanan	Nehemiah	420

7	Jehohanan's son		
8	his son		
9	Tobiah, prince	Ptolemy II	270
10	Joseph	Ptolemy III	230
11	Tobiah	Antiochus III	200

The region of Ammon was located in Transjordan around the modern capital of Amman. Tobiah is called **טבד**, literally “slave” or “servant.” The Revised Standard Version rendered the term literally as a derisive epithet, “Tobias, the Ammonite, the slave.” But **טבד** was often used of high officials both in biblical and in extra-biblical texts. Tobiah was probably the governor of Ammon under the Persians. A later Tobtah (no. 9 in the table above) is explicitly called “the governor of Ammon.” The latter was a leader of the Jewish Hellenizers under Ptolemy II,⁵⁷ a relationship which is also illumined by the Zenon papyri.⁵⁸

The site of ‘Araq el-Emir (“Caverns of the Prince”), about eleven miles west of Amman, was the center of the Tobiads. The visible remains of a large building on top of the hill, Qasr el-'Abd (“Castle of the Slave”), 60 by 120 feet, have been interpreted as a Jewish temple built by Tobiah (no. 11).

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On two halls are inscriptions with the name Tobiah in Aramaic characters. The date of the inscriptions is much disputed. Mazar favors the sixth or fifth century B.C., Naveh the fourth century, and Cross the fourth or third century. Lapp, who reexcavated the site in 1961–62, favors a date in the third or second century.⁵⁹

Geshem the Arab

Geshem (Neh 1:10) is also called Gashmu in Nehemiah 6:1, a variant which would have been closer to the original Arabic name. *Jasuma*, which means “bulky” or “stout,” is found in various Arabic inscriptions including Safaitic, Lihyanite, Thamudic, and Nabataean.

A Lihyanite inscription from Dedan (modern Al-'Ulā) in Northwest Arabia reads, “Jam son of ahr and 'Abd, governor of Dedan.” This Jam is identified by Winnett and Albright with the biblical Geshem.⁶⁰

In 1947 several silver vessels, some with Aramaic inscriptions dating to the late fifth century B.C., were discovered at Tell el-Maskhūta near Ismaila by the Suez Canal. One inscription bore the name, “Qaynu the son of Gashmu, the king of Qedar.” As this also seems to refer to the biblical Geshem, it may be concluded that the latter was in charge of a powerful north Arabian confederacy which controlled vast areas from northeast Egypt to northern Arabia and southern Palestine. Geshem may have been opposed to Nehemiah's development of an independent kingdom because he feared that it might interfere with his lucrative trade in myrrh and frankincense.⁶¹

Rebuilding the Walls

The walls of Jerusalem which had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586, despite abortive attempts to rebuild them (Ezra 4:6–23), remained in ruins for almost a century and a half before Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem. Excavations have helped illuminate Nehemiah's work.

The first thing Nehemiah did was to make a nocturnal inspection of the walls (Neh 2:11–15). Kenyon's excavations between 1961 and 1967 on the eastern slopes of Ophel, the original hill of Jerusalem just south of the Temple area, revealed the collapse of the terraces, possibly the “Millo” which David and Solomon had to keep repairing. She writes:

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The tumble of stones uncovered by our Trench 1 is a vivid sample of the ruinous state of the eastern side of Jerusalem that balked Nehemiah's donkey. The event shows that the sight of this cascade of stones persuaded Nehemiah that he could not attempt to restore the quarter of Jerusalem on the eastern slope of the eastern ridge, or the wall that enclosed it.⁶²

In 1970–71 Avigad, excavating in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem, discovered to the west of the Temple area a seven-meter thick wall and cleared it for some forty meters. He identifies this with “the broad wall” (Heb, **הַחוֹמָה הַרְחֵבָה**) repaired by Nehemiah (Neh 3:8). The phrase is usually understood as a thick wall, but Grafman interprets it to mean a long, extensive wall.⁶³

The wall is dated to the early seventh century and was probably built by Hezekiah (2 Chron 32:5). Broshi surmises that the great expansion to and beyond the Broad Wall which caused a threefold to fourfold expansion of the city was occasioned by the influx of refugees fleeing from the fall of Samaria in 722.⁶⁴

On the crest of the Ophel Hill, Macalister discovered in 1923–25 a complex including a wall, a ramp, and a great tower, which he mistakenly ascribed to David and Solomon. Kenyon demonstrated in her excavations that the complex rests on the ruins of houses destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 and must therefore be more recent. Kenyon believed that the tower dates to the second century B.C.⁶⁵ On the other hand, Mazar comments in regard to the tower, “It is not possible to determine whether it is hellenistic, or whether it had already been erected in Persian times. In the latter case, it may possibly be identified with the ‘great projecting tower’ described by Nehemiah (3:26–27).”⁶⁶

Excavations in 1978 at the base of the tower revealed “for the first time in Jerusalem a Persian-period ceramic layer within clear stratigraphical

context—solid archaeological evidence for that resettlement of the Babylonian exiles in the City of David.”⁶⁷ Kenyon also found what she believes was part of Nehemiah’s wall on the crest of the rock scarp on the summit of Ophel: “It was solidly built, c. 2.75 metres thick, but its finish was rough, as might be expected in work executed so rapidly.”⁶⁸

The “East Gate” mentioned in Nehemiah 3:29 may have been the predecessor of the present “Golden Gate.”⁶⁹ A storm which opened up a crack permitted the clandestine viewing of the arch of an earlier gate below the Golden Gate.⁷⁰

In spite of opposition from without and of dissension from within because of economic problems,⁷¹ Nehemiah was able to

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galvanize the people by his leadership so that they were able to complete the rebuilding in only fifty-two days (Neh 6:15).

Nehemiah as a Leader

Nehemiah provides one of the most vivid patterns of leadership in the Scriptures.⁷²

1. He was *a man of responsibility*, as shown by his position as the royal cupbearer.
2. He was *a man of vision*. He knew who God was and what He could do through His servants. Nehemiah was not, however, a visionary, but instead was a man who planned and then acted.
3. He was *a man of prayer*. He prayed spontaneously and constantly even in the presence of the king (Neh 2:4–5).
4. He was *a man of action and of cooperation*. He realized what had to be done, explained it to others, and enlisted their aid.

Nehemiah, a layman, was able to cooperate with his contemporary, Ezra, the scribe and priest, in spite of the fact that these two leaders were of entirely different temperaments. In reaction to the intermarriage of the people, Ezra plucked out his own hair (Ezra 9:3) whereas Nehemiah pulled out the hair of the offenders (Neh 13:25)!

5. He was *a man of compassion*. He was moved by the plight of the poorer members of society so that he renounced his rights (Neh 5:18) and denounced the greed of the wealthy (Neh 5:8).
6. He was *a man who triumphed over opposition*. His opponents tried ridicule (Neh 4:3), attempted slander (Neh 6:5–7), and spread misleading messages (Neh 6:10–14). But Nehemiah would not be distracted or discouraged.
7. He was *a man who was rightly motivated*. The last words of Nehemiah, “Remember me, O my God, for good” (13:31), recapitulate an oft-repeated theme running through the final chapter (vv. 14, 22, 29). His motive throughout his ministry was to please and to serve his divine sovereign Lord.

¹James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3d ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 491-92 (Cowley, no. 30). On the Elephantine papyri see Bezael Porten, *Archives from Elephantine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968); *Jews of Elephantine and Arameans of Syene*, trans. Bezael Porten (Jerusalem: Academon, 1976); Bezael Porten, “Aramaic Papyri and Parchments: A New Look,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 42 (1979): 74-104.

²There were three Persian kings by this name: Artaxerxes I (464–424), Artaxerxes II (403–359), and Artaxerxes III (358–337). The king in this passage is Artaxerxes I.

³Plutarch *Artaxerxes* 1.1.

⁴J. Neuffer, “The Accession of Artaxerxes I,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 6 (1968): 81.

⁵Edwin M. Yamauchi, “The Achaemenid Capitals,” *Near East Archaeological Society Bulletin* 8 (1976): 5-13.

⁶R. G. Kent, *Old Persian*, rev. ed. (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1953), pp. 113, 153.

⁷Thucydides 1.104.

⁸Diodorus Siculus 11.77.1–5.

⁹Edwin M. Yamauchi, “The Background of Esther,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137 (April-June 1980): 104-5.

¹⁰For further details on the reign of Artaxerxes I, see A. T. Olmstead, *History of Palestine and Syria to the Macedonian Conquest* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1931), pp. 587-88; A. T. Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 303-54; J. M. Myers, *The World of the Restoration* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1968), pp. 103-5; H. Bengtson et al., *The Greeks and the Persians* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970), pp. 94-96, pp. 340-41.

¹¹J. A. Emerton, “Did Ezra Go to Jerusalem in 428 B.C.?” *Journal of Theological Studies* 17 (1966): 16; cf. N. H. Snaith, “The Date of Ezra’s Arrival in Jerusalem,” *Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 63 (1952): 63.

¹²John Bright, “The Date of Ezra’s Mission to Jerusalem,” *Yehezkel Kaufmann Jubilee Volume*, ed. M. Haran (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1960), p. 86; cf. M. W. Leesberg, “Ezra and Nehemiah: A Review of the Return and Reform,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 33 (1962): 85.

¹³Josephus has Ezra passing away before the arrival of Nehemiah, a state of affairs which has not been taken seriously by scholars (*Antiquities of the Jews* 11.158).

¹⁴Peter R. Ackroyd, *Israel under Babylon* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 194; cf. L. H. Brockington, *Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1969), p. 32.

¹⁵Frank M. Cross, “A Reconstruction of the Judean Restoration,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 94 (1975): 14. Others favoring a date of around

- 400 for the work of the Chronicler, including Ezra and Nehemiah, are W. Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemiah* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1949), p. 25; J. M. Myers, *Ezra-Nehemiah* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1965), p. lxx; H. G. M. Williamson, *Israel in the Book of Chronicles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 86.
- ¹⁶V. Pavlovský, "Die Chronologie der Tätigkeit Esdras," *Biblica* 38 (1957): 284-85.
- ¹⁷F. Heichelheim, "Ezra's Palestine and Periclean Athens," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 3 (1951): 251-53. Cf. Morton Smith, "Ezra," in *Ex Orbe Religionum*, ed. C. J. Bleeker et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), 1:141-43.
- ¹⁸J. L. Myres, "Persia, Greece and Israel," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 85 (1953): 13.
- ¹⁹Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 11.297-301.
- ²⁰B. Reicke, *The New Testament Era* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), p. 16.
- ²¹H. H. Rowley, "The Chronological Order of Ezra and Nehemiah," *Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume*, ed. S. Löwinger and J. Somogyi (Budapest: n.p., 1948), pp. 117-49.
- ²²Rowley's essay was reprinted in his *Servant of the Lord* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1952), which was reissued with some revisions (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1965), pp. 135-68.
- ²³U. Kellermann, "Erwägungen zum Problem der Esradatierung," *Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 80 (1968): 55-87. Cf. I. H. Eybers, "Chronological Problems in Ezra-Nehemiah," *Ou-Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap in Suider-Africa* (1976), ed. W. C. van Wyk (Pretoria: University of Pretoria, n.d.), pp. 10-29.
- ²⁴W. F. Stinespring, "Prolegomenon," to C. C. Torrey, *Ezra Studies* (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1970), p. xiv.
- ²⁵Smith, "Ezra," p. 143; Morton Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics That Shaped the Old Testament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 122.
- ²⁶Cross, "A Reconstruction of the Judean Restoration," p. 14.
- ²⁷S. Talmon, "Ezra and Nehemiah," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Supplementary Volume*, ed. K. Crim et al. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976), p. 320.
- ²⁸H. Tadmor, "The Babylonian Exile and the Restoration," in *A History of the Jewish People*, ed. H. Ben-Sasson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 174. For further details on this problem see Edwin M. Yamauchi, "The Reverse Order of Ezra/Nehemiah Reconsidered," *Themelios* 5 (1980): 7-13.
- ²⁹Yohanan Aharoni, "Three Hebrew Ostraca from Arad," *Eretz Israel* 9 (1969): 10-21; Yohanan Aharoni, "The 'Nehemiah' Ostrakon from Arad," *Eretz Israel* 12 (1975): 72-76; *Inscriptions Reveal*, 2d ed. (Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 1973), pp. 36-37.
- ³⁰Frank M. Cross, "The Discovery of the Samaria Papyri," *Biblical Archaeologist* 26 (1963): 111.
- ³¹Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 1.3.9.
- ³²See E. Weidner, "Hof- und Harems-Erlasse assyrischer Könige aus dem 2. Jahrtausend v. Chr.," *Archiv für Orientforschung* 17 (1954-55): 257-93.
- ³³See also Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 16.230.
- ³⁴R. North, "Civil Authority in Ezra," *Studi in onore di Edoardo Volterra* (Milan: Casa Editrice Dott. A. Giuffrè, 1971), 6:397.
- ³⁵See Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 1.3.8-9.
- ³⁶The eunuch Halotus, who was the official "taster" for Claudius, was used by Agrippina to poison the emperor (Suetonius *Claudius* no. 44). See J. P. V. D. Balsdon, *Romans and Aliens* (London: Duckworth & Co., 1977), p. 228.
- ³⁷See Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Was Nehemiah the Cupbearer a Eunuch?" *Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 92 (1980): 132-42.
- ³⁸See G. R. Driver and J. C. Miles, *The Assyrian Laws* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 463; Kenneth A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 1967), p. 165.
- ³⁹E. Meyer, *Die Entstehung des Judentums* (Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1896), p. 194; Cf. J. Theis, *Geschichtliche und literarkritische Fragen in Esra 1-6* (Muenster: Aschendorff, 1910), pp. 66-67. U. Kellermann declares such an etymology obsolete (*Nehemia Quellen Überlieferung und Geschichte* [Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1967], p. 155). W. T. in der Smitten suggests that the word *tirshata* means "the circumcised one"—a most improbable suggestion ("Der 'Tirschata' in Esra-Nehemiah," *Vetus Testamentum* 21 [1971]: 618-20).
- ⁴⁰Rudolph, *Esra und Nehemiah*, p. 25; cf. K. Galling, *Studien zur Geschichte Israels im Persischen Zeitalter* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1964), pp. 57, 81.
- ⁴¹Weidner, "Hof- und Harems-Erlasse," p. 261.
- ⁴²F. W. König, *Die Persika des Ktesias von Knidos* (Graz: Archiv für Orientforschung, 1972), pp. 176-77.
- ⁴³F. C. Fensham, "Pehâ in the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East," in Wyck, *Ou-Testamentiese Werkgemeenskap*, pp. 44-52.
- ⁴⁴N. Avigad, *Bullae and Seals from a Post-Exilic Judean Archive* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1976); Talmon, "Ezra and Nehemiah,"

pp. 325-27.

⁴⁵Though Edomites are not mentioned by name in Ezra-Nehemiah, it is apparent from the harsh condemnation of the Edomites in Scripture (2 Chron 25:11; Ezek 25:12–14; Ps 137:7; Obad; Mal 1:4) that the Edomites took advantage of the Babylonian conquest of Judah. An important confirmation of this enmity comes from an inscription from Arad (early sixth century B.C.) which reads, “Behold, I have sent to warn you today: (Get) the men to Elisha! Lest Edom should come thither. Send reinforcements to Ramoth-Negeb.” See *Inscriptions Reveal*, p. 37; and Y. Aharoni, “Three Hebrew ostraca from Arad,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 197 (1970): 16-42.

By the fourth century B.C. the Edomites were pushed westward to the region South of Hebron, later known as Idumaea, by the Arab Nabataeans. See J. M. Myers, “Edom and Judah in the Sixth-Fifth Centuries B.C.,” in *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, ed. H. Goedicke (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), pp. 377-92; J. Lindsay, “The Babylonian Kings and Edom, 605-550 B.C.,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 108 (1976): 23-39; J. R. Bartlett, “The Rise and Fall of the Kingdom of Edom,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 104 (1972): 26-37; J. R. Bartlett, “From Edomites to Nabataeans,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 111 (1979): 53-66.

⁴⁶In the Persian period the coast was occupied by the descendants of the Philistines and by Phoenicians. Ashkelon was under the Tyrians. From Ashdod (Neh 13:23), the center of the Persian province, has come an ostrakon with a Phoenician name. See Frank M. Cross, “An Ostrakon from Nebī Yūnis,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 14 (1964): 185. Cf. H. J. Katzenstein, “Tyre in the Early Persian Period (539-486 B.C.E.),” *Biblical Archaeologist* 42 (1979): 23-34.

⁴⁷Thucydides 1.90. The Spartans themselves were unique in having a city without walls as they relied on their formidable army.

⁴⁸One must distinguish between the syncretistic and polytheistic “Samaritans” of Nehemiah’s day and the monotheistic “Samaritans.” As J. MacDonald notes, “the word *translated* ‘the Samaritans’ occurs (in 2 Kings 17:29) for the first and only time in the Old Testament. The Hebrew word *shomrōnīm* is everywhere rendered thus without question. It is only as the result of close study of the new materials to hand that it becomes plain that the word has always been wrongly translated and that for ‘the Samaritans’ we must read ‘the Samaritans.’ On linguistic grounds, it is abundantly clear that the word *shomrōn* (the normal Hebrew spelling for the ‘city of Samaria’) in the plural here means ‘the inhabitants/people of Samaria’. ... There is no connection here between the inhabitants of Samaria, as such, and the religious group called the Samaritans, who themselves derive their name from the Hebrew verb ‘to keep’ (‘The Discovery of Samaritan Religion,’ *Religion* 2 [1972]: 143).”

The recent trend in Samaritan studies is to lower the date of the Samaritan schism from the time of Nehemiah to the fourth century B.C. or even later. See J. A. Montgomery, *The Samaritans* (Philadelphia: John Winston, 1907); H. H. Rowley, “The Samaritan Schism in Legend and History,” *Israel’s Prophetic Heritage*, ed. B. W. Anderson and W. Harrelson (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), pp. 208-22; M. Delcor, “Hinweise auf das Samaritanische Schisma im AT,” *Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 74 (1962): 281-91; H. H. Rowley, “Sanballat and the Samaritan Temple,” *Men of God* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1963), pp. 246-76; J. MacDonald, *Theology of the Samaritans* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964); R. Toumay, “Quelques relectures bibliques antisamaritaines,” *Revue Biblique* 71 (1964): 504-36; Frank M. Cross, “Aspects of Samaritan and Jewish History in Later Persian and Hellenistic Times,” *Harvard Theological Review* 59 (1966): 201-11; J. D. Purvis, *The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Origin of the Samaritan Sect* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968); H. G. Kippenberg, *Garizim und Synagoge* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1971); R. J. Coggins, *Samaritans and Jews* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975); S. Talmon, “The Samaritans,” *Scientific American*, January 1977, pp. 100-108; R. Pummer, “The Present State of Samaritan Studies,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 21 (1976): 39-61; 22 (1977): 27-47.

⁴⁹See O. Leuze, *Die Satrapieneinteilung in Syrien und im Zweistromlande ...* (Halle: Königsberger Gelehrten Gesellschaft, 1935) for the situation in Syria and Mesopotamia.

⁵⁰M. Tadmor, “Fragments of an Achaemenid Throne from Samaria,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 24 (1974): 42.

⁵¹Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, p. 492 (Cowley, no. 30.29).

⁵²A good portion of the personal names from the Samaria papyri (see following note) included the names of such deities as Qos (Edomite), SHR (Aramaic), Chemosh (Moabite), Ba’al (Canaanite), and Nebo (Babylonian). Cf. J. W. McKay, *Religion in Judah under the Assyrians* (London: SCM Press, 1973), p. 69.

⁵³See Cross, “The Discovery of the Samaria Papyri,” pp. 110-20; Nancy L. Lapp, ed., *The Tale of the Tell: Archaeological Studies by Paul W. Lapp* (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1975), pp. 66-76; Paul W. Lapp, “Bedouin Find Papyri Three Centuries Older than Dead Sea Scrolls,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 4 (1978): 16-24; Frank M. Cross, “The Historical Importance of the Samaria Papyri,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 4 (1978): 25-27; Paul W. Lapp and Nancy L. Lapp, eds., *Discoveries in the Wādī ed-Dāliyah* (Cambridge: American Schools of Oriental Research, 1974).

⁵⁴Cross, “A Reconstruction of the Judean Restoration,” pp. 4-18.

⁵⁵B. Obed, “The Historical Background of the Syro-Ephraimite War Reconsidered,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 34 (1972): 161.

⁵⁶B. Mazar, “The Tobiads,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 7 (1957): 137-45; 229–38.

⁵⁷Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* 12.160.

⁵⁸See Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, trans. John Bowden, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 1:39–43, 47–57; 2:31–40. For the papyrus which mentions Tobias, see V. A. Tcherikover and A. Fuks, eds., *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 1:118ff.

⁵⁹C. C. McCown, “The ‘Araq el-Emir and the Tobiads,” *Biblical Archaeologist* 20 (1957): 63-76; P. W. Lapp, “Soundings at ‘Araq el-Emîr (Jordan),” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 165 (1962): 16-34; P. W. Lapp, “The Second and Third Campaigns at ‘Araq el-Emîr,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 171 (1963): 8-39; J. Naveh, *The Development of the Aramaic Script*

(Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1970), pp. 62-64; Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 1:49, 267–77.

⁶⁰F. V. Winnett, *A Study of the Lihvanite and Thamudic Inscriptions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1937), pp. 50-51; William F. Albright, "Dedan," *Geschichte und Altes Testament* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1943), pp. 1-12.

⁶¹Frank M. Cross, "Geshem the Arabian, Enemy of Nehemiah," *Biblical Archaeologist* 18 (1955): 46-47; I. Rabinowitz, "Aramaic Inscriptions of the Fifth Century B.C.E.," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 15 (1956): 1-9; W. J. Dumbrell, "The Tell el-Maskhuta Bowls and the 'Kingdom' of Qedar in the Persian Period," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 203 (1971): 33-44; A. K. Irvine, "The Arabs and Ethiopians," *Peoples of Old Testament Times*, ed. Donald J. Wiseman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), pp. 287-311.

⁶²Kathleen Kenyon, *Jerusalem* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1967), pp. 107-8.

⁶³R. Grafman, "Nehemiah's 'Broad Wall,'" *Israel Exploration Journal* 24 (1974): 50-51.

⁶⁴M. Broshi, "The Expansion of Jerusalem in the Reigns of Hezekiah and Manasseh," *Israel Exploration Journal* 24 (1974): 21-26. N. Avigad, who discovered the wall, believed that it turned west and then south to enclose the Pool of Siloam. See N. Avigad, "Excavations in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, Jerusalem, 1970," *Israel Exploration Journal* 20 (1970): 129-40; N. Avigad, "Excavations in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, 1971," *Israel Exploration Journal* 22 (1972): 193-200. But Kathleen Kenyon believed that the wall must have turned east as she found no evidence of an early settlement on the southwest hill (*Digging Up Jerusalem* [London: Ernest Benn, 1974], p. 148).

⁶⁵Kenyon, *Jerusalem*, p. 115.

⁶⁶B. Mazar, *The Mountain of the Lord* (Garden City, NY:Doubleday & Co., 1975), p. 198.

⁶⁷Y. Shiloh, "City of David:Excavation 1978," *Biblical Archaeologist* 42 (1979): 168.

⁶⁸Kenyon, *Jerusalem*, p. 111; Kenyon, *Digging up Jerusalem*, pp. 183-84.

⁶⁹S. Steckoll, *The Gates of Jerusalem* (Tel Aviv: Am Hasefer, 1968), pp. 29-33.

⁷⁰G. Giacomakis, "The Gate below the Golden Gate," *Near East Archaeological Society Bulletin* 4 (1974): 23-26.

⁷¹See Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Two Reformers Compared: Solon of Athens and Nehemiah of Jerusalem," in *The Bible World*, ed. G. Rendsburg et al. (New York: KTAV Publishing House, forthcoming).

⁷²Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Nehemiah: Master of Business Administration," *His*, January 1979, pp. 8-10; Alan Redpath, *Victorious Christian Service* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1958); Cyril J. Barber, *Nehemiah and the Dynamics of Effective Leadership* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1976); Richard H. Seume, *Nehemiah: God's Builder* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978); Donald K. Campbell, *Nehemiah: Man in Charge* (Wheaton, IL: SP Publications, Victor Books. 1979).

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